

FILED

DEC 27 2019



FREDERICKSBURG
CIRCUIT COURT

7B. July 5 – Mayor Greenlaw

7C. Braehead Stormwater Issues –Councilor Kelly

Slave Auction Block Removal. Councilor Frye noted how grateful he was to the City for engaging in a conversation about the slave auction block, and African American history. The unanimous support of hiring the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience led to hundreds coming together and talking about the difficult topic of race relations in Fredericksburg and America. He said he believes the City has grown as a community, and in light of the Coalition's final report he believes the City is ready to take a bold action. With that, Councilor Frye moved that the slave auction block be removed from the corner of Charles and William Street and that it be brought to the Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM) for internal display, interpretation and protection; the motion was seconded by Councilor Duffy.

Councilor Frye said this action would help ensure that the City continue to be a place that works for everyone and a community where the people are writing the next chapters of Fredericksburg's history. He requested the City Manager to bring a plan to Council no later than July 9, to execute the slave auction block removal by the end of this calendar year.

Councilor Kelly said this has been good discussion in the City and he said the City has set the example and brought the community together and it has given everyone the opportunity to speak. He said coming out of those discussions, the City said it would come back with how it wanted to present the auction block. Councilor Kelly said everyone had their own positions but everyone was trying to get to the same point by ensuring nothing like what the auction block represents, never happen again and that the citizens of the community recognize that we have a role in making sure something like that never happens again. He thanked the community and the Council for having civil discussions that will continue

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FB Jan 2 - District Court

FC - Blacked Statement Issues - Council Kelly

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Councilor Kelly said this action would help ensure that the City continues to be a place that works for everyone and a community where the people are winning the next chapters of Fredericksburg's history. He requested the City Manager to bring a plan to Council no later than July 31 to ensure the slave auction block removal by the end of the calendar year.

Councilor Kelly said this has been good discussion in the City and he said the City has set the example and brought the community together and it has given everyone the opportunity to speak. He said coming out of that discussion, the City said it would come back with how it wanted to present the auction block. Councilor Kelly said everyone had their own positions but everyone was trying to get to the same point by ensuring nothing like what the auction block represents never happen again and that the citizens of the community all agree that we have a role in making sure something like that never happens again. He thanked the community and the Council for having civil discussions that will continue

beyond this issue. Councilor Kelly had one concern about voting on removing the slave auction block at this evenings meeting. He said this has been a community discussion and he did not feel like the community had been made aware that this action would be taken at this meeting and he was concerned that many would read about it after the fact. He said it was imperative to let the community know where the City stands and what actions it plans to take and the context in which it plans to take those actions before a vote was taken.

Councilor Kelly made a substitute motion to postpone the vote on the motion for two weeks so the public could be aware that this would be taking place and it would give the community an opportunity to speak to the issue before the vote; motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Withers.

Mayor Greenlaw warned that she would not be at the next meeting to place a vote and Councilor Kelly said it was too important to hold off any longer

Vice-Mayor Withers said he agreed with delaying the vote. He said he spent a great deal of time reading the African American history of the City and he would at some point vote to move the block. He said the City has gone out of its way to involve the whole community and he would like to defer and he would like to defer until Mayor Greenlaw returns on July 9 because the vote was too important.

Councilor Kelly amended the motion until July 9.

Councilor Frye said there were a lot of people present at the meeting so the public was aware and he said he made a public announcement at the work session saying that he would be bringing this item up for a vote. He said the City has been working on the project for a year and a half and the community was waiting for a decision. He said the process has been public and it was time for the City to make a decision.

Councilor Devine said the public has been aware that this has been discussed for a year and a half. She agree that the public had not weighed in on what to do with the block but that would be the next step.

Councilor Duffy said he has learned a lot through this process and his view has changed and he was enthusiastic about voting to move the artifact. He has been moved by the account and views from his neighbors. He said it was powerful to talk to people about their views and it was great education for him, more then he got in history books and especially contemporary American race relations. Councilor Duffy said he was also moved by the report from ICSC and how difficult it would be to represent the context of the artifact on the street corner.

Vice-Mayor Withers said it looked like the motion would carry through to remove the block and the issue was too important for the Council to be split so he withdrew his second to the substitute motion in hopes that Councilor Kelly would go along with that. Mayor Greenlaw noted that without a second, there was no motion and with no objection the Council moved to the original motion.

Mayor Greenlaw clarified that there was a designated location for the auction block at FAM and that was a part of the original motion. She also referenced John Meecham's book *The Soul of America – The Battle for Our Better Angels* which she said reminds that from the beginning the United States has struggled to deliver on the promises of the Declaration of the Independence, to make a more perfect union. Race has often been at the heart of these struggles and we cannot and should not deny that. Mr. Meecham defines the first duties of an American citizen to enter the arena, to resist tribalism, to respect fact and deploy reason, and find a critical balance above all keeping history in mind. Mayor Greenlaw said she has found this advice pertinent to the yearlong discussion regarding the auction block. She said it

was her belief that the City tried to find a critical balance while keeping history in mind. Mayor Greenlaw said she was impressed by the honesty shown by all participants and the desire to leave a truthful history. She believes history would be better served by moving the artifact to FAM and more importantly charging the Memorial Advisory Committee to gather a committee to review the history and how it is told and to ensure the City does a better job at telling the whole story of the City. Mayor Greenlaw thanked the citizens for their participation and she thanked the Council for their leadership through this process.

Councilor Devine stated that the community involvement has enhanced her decision to vote to move the artifact. She said she does that with hesitation because as a history teacher she worry about losing pieces of history that may offer good lessons about life. Councilor Devine stated that today there was a strong tolerance for racism and cruelty and they tend to be daily staples in the news. She does not want anyone to sugar coat the horrors of slavery and she mentioned that when she taught eight grade geography slavery was referred to as forced migration in the state issued books and the word slavery was not in print. The ICSC reports spoke about how important a sense of place is and if the artifact was removed she would like to see a marker put in its place. Councilor Devine encourage citizens to stay involved and active.

Councilor Graham thanked Councilor Frye for the hours of effort and for his dedication to get to this point. He said it was interesting to see the reactions across the community and seeing people realizing their reaction was not the only one. He thanked all who came out and grew through this process. Councilor Graham said this was a difficult matter for a City that values its history as Fredericksburg does but he said we must address America's original sin, which was slavery and the treatment of African Americans. He said this was an opportunity to set an example for the Commonwealth, nation and the world.

Councilor Frye said to sit as the only minority on the Council this was huge and he felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. He said to be heard was great because he came from ancestors who were never heard.

Councilor Kelly said it was important to have all sides to the table and he said he does not dispute that the marker caused pain to some but it also evokes shame to others. He said this auction block sits at a very prominent corner today and it should be a jolting experience when you come upon it. He said slavery is still here as well as prejudice and he said people need daily reminders of what they are capable of doing. He again expressed his concern for moving forward with the vote before hearing the public out.

The motion to remove the auction block was approved by the following recorded votes. Ayes (6). Councilors Greenlaw, Withers, Devine, Duffy, Frye and Graham. Nays (1). Councilor Kelly.

July 5. Mayor Greenlaw reported that the July 4th was on a Thursday this year and the Governor has granted July 5 as a holiday and she asked the Council to give the same to the City employees. She also asked Assistant City Manager Whitley what the impact on the City would be and he said the estimated cost would be \$12,000-\$15,000.

Councilor Devine moved to give City employees who are not essential employees July 5 off; motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Withers and passed by the following recorded votes. Ayes (7). Councilors Greenlaw, Withers, Devine, Duffy, Frye, Graham and Kelly. Nays (0).

Braehead Stormwater Issues. Councilor Kelly asked staff if the City had attributed to the Stormwater issues in Braehead because of Morningside and if so the City has an obligation to do something to fix it.